DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 181 949 **JC 800 034**

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TITLE	Overview of the Dialog: Community Colleges Face the Need for Change.
INSTITUTION	Chabot Coll., Hayward, Calif.
PUB DATE	79
NOTE	9p.; May not reproduce well due to small size of type
JOURNAL CIT	Chabot College Journal; v3 n3 p4-10 Win-Spr 1979
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Basic Skills; Community Colleges; Conventional Instruction; *Dropout Prevention; *Educational Alternatives; *Educational Needs; Individualized Instruction; Instructional Materials; Instructional Materials Centers; Junior College Libraries; *Junior Colleges; Language Handicaps; Learning Laboratories; Librarians; Literature Reviews; *Nontraditional Students; Part Time Students; *School Holding Power; Student Personnel Services
IDENTIFIERS	*No Shows

ABSTRACT

A brainstorming session and a literature review were conducted at Chabot College to determine alternative methods of serving those constituencies (about 5,000 per quarter) who register for courses but who either do not show up for class or who drop out before the second census week. The brainstorming session, held at the college's learning resources center, yielded several suggestions to promote the persistence of non-traditional students, including the provision of additional basic skills instruction for marginally performing students, flexible scheduling for older and/or employed students who can attend only on an irregular basis, and additional courses for those desiring instruction in special interest areas. Supporting this need for alternative programs, the literature review: (1) demonstrated the desirability of breaking the "lockstep" configuration of traditional educational practices which do not recognize the differing learning needs of individual students; (2) noted that all students could earn A's in a well-designed, individualized course; and (3) proposed alternative learning formats, including multi-media instruction and mini-courses. In response to these needs, Chabot College is considering the implementation of a "Library-College" program to provide individualized instruction using learning materials and equipment under the guidance of professional librarians. (JP)

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Overview of the Dialog:

COMMUNITY COLLEGES FACE THE NEED FOR CHANGE

by Don Sherwood Mayo

Chabot College Journal
Volume 3, Number 3
Winter/Spring 1979

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Overview of the Dialog:
COMMUNITY COLLEGES FACE THE NEED FOR CHANGE

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After Proposition 13 and in light of changing student characteristics and needs, the Journal editor looks at the literature on alternatives, non-traditional curriculum, and library-college programs and approaches. The "new student" represents both a challenge and an opportunity for community college educators.

Perspective

Of a total of 21,000 students who made contact with Chabot College prior to and during the registration period for a recent quarter, only 16,000 were attending classes by the beginning of the second census week. Of these, about a thousand had not enrolled at all, and the other 4,000 had dropped from classes in which they had enrolled. This population of some 5,000 no-shows and bail-outs, if for no reason other than sheer numbers, has become a matter of major concern to the college.

Other institutions with whom we talked informally indicated that they have experienced about the same ratio of no-shows and bail-outs in their own districts. For this reason, a closer examination of available avenues by which to better serve these students, who represent about 20 percent of the total population physically contacting the college each quarter, and who are lost from total enrollments, was decided upon, and a study has been initiated to provide data on these losses. Results of the study will be published in a future Journal.

Meanwhile, a two-pronged attack has been launched to determine what may be the reasons for loss of this significant percentage of contacting students, in terms of *needs to be addressed* that can be identified tentatively on the basis of observation, intuition and professional speculation, and a review of the literature has been made to gain an overview of the dialog of the profession regarding both the need for, and the feasibility of developing alternatives to present practice which will enable the college to better serve its total population.

Librarians Brainstorm

Initial thrust of the attack was attemped by the Library/Learning Resources professional staff, taking into consideration the many special courses and programs which are now offered to meet the needs of "new populations"—reading and writing centers, for example, Math "X" and the like, evening and Saturday courses and so on. Despite these considerable efforts, there seemed to remain a growing need for broader opportunity among special segments of the district population to take advantage of innovative, alternative means for educational growth. Obviously, 5,000 people who had made the effort to make contact with the college represented a significant population not being served by the district, and who might have been had we been ready to offer courses and programs in direct response to their needs. Short of a detailed statistical survey, which will be done, the initial brainstorming sessions held in the Learning Resources Center conference room suggested some important areas to think about.

Among these were *basic skills*, the needs of marginally performing students; the need for library orientations in languages other than English (e.g., Spanish, Vietnamese, Iranian, etc.), and the need to provide additional resources for developing, for example, Term Paper Clinics. Other needs and areas of focus uncovered in the brainstorming session included several related to *part-time students*: the need to provide a format for individually proposed self-study, under direction, in special interest areas for which the college has source materials and professional staff; and the need to provide short-term, multiple and/or open entry opportunity for the student who is otherwise deprived of entering a regularly scheduled, full-time course or curriculum.

Special interest skills and/or subject-matter areas were looked at, focusing on the need to offer courses not currently scheduled or provided, the need to provide courses requested directly by business, industry, government agencies and the like; the need for pan-cultural studies (e.g., geographical, fine arts, Great Ideas and related topics). Alternatives for the older, mature and "returning" student, career interested, and physically limited were examined and proposed. Ethnic studies, paraprofessional, continuing and faculty development areas were discussed as were areas of focus in such categories as enrichment, program acceleration, and so on.

Outcomes

Specific outcomes were proposed for such an approach: to assure persistence of students who drop out of regular classes by offering additional entry opportunities and alternative learning styles; to provide additional skills and subject-matter learning opportunity for students who need studies not regularly offered in the curriculum; to provide flexible scheduling and alternative learning opportunities for older, more mature and/or employed persons who can attend only part-time, or on an irregualr basis; and to enrich current curriculum by offering additional study in specialized areas which expand the scope but do not compete with regular course offerings.

Other outcomes proposed: To respond to the need for alternative learning formats to provide access to learning materials not normally available to the physically disadvantaged (e.g., large print for the visually impaired, audio for the blind, visual for the deaf, etc.); to extend educational opportunity to segments of the community which have not been reached by the traditional programs of the college; to increase the purposeful and systematic utilization of library-learning resources materials, equipment and professional staff. Still others: to enhance the quality of life of individuals attending the college by providing a means of tailoring educatonal opportunity to individual and social needs, and to stimulate and increase participation of the college faculty in the development and utilization of contemporary formats and technologies in teaching and learning.

Literature Examined

Second thrust of the attack was to examine the present literature to see what the profession in general has to say about the desirability and need for serious innovation in education. Here is the crux of the matter: if, in addition to the felt needs and observed imperatives of our own condition as seen by the faculty there is general acceptance of innovation as both needed and justified by practice, then we can expect to undertake the challenge of implementing it at Chabot College with confidence.

The balance of this article is taken from that review. It is presented here as a shared insight into an enormous body of literature which strongly urges change

and supports the contention that if we are to serve all who come to us and seek to grow educationally, we should expect to shake up some of our old ideas and accept both new challenges and new directions for the traditional systemics of higher education. Leslie Rich[1] puts it this way:

Rationale for Change

> " 'Different strokes for different folks' is an idea that came relatively late to education. But in a good many American cities that idea is considered to be better late than never. The cause of educational alternatives—classes, programs, entire schools apart from the mainstream—has been taken up with increasing fervor by those who for reasons real or questionable are dissatisfied with traditional education."

And many are, particularly as we reach out in education today to serve the new and changing populations that are arriving in increasing numbers at the gates of our community colleges. Those gates are open, as Patricia Cross notes in her "Beyond Education for All—Toward Education for Each," a beginning chapter title in her recent book.[2] The community colleges have, with the open door policy, effectively increased the availability of higher education to many "previously excluded segments of the population." But because of differing learning needs and styles,differing constraints related to student characteristics, and a variety of other factors, we have an incomplete model. What is needed now is a means by which to individualize learning opportunity through further modifications in the way we utilize the instructional process itself.

Academic Lockstep

A variety of authorities supports this contention. McKeachie[3] comments that the educational process in America, reflecting the principle of democratic process in treating everyone alike—"in the interest of fairness"—actually has created an "academic lockstep" in the traditional classroom which permits easy management of school populations but overlooks individual differences.

Egg-Crate Colleges

Goodlad, in looking at the organization of schools in the context of alternatives (and alternatives to alternatives) notes[4] that the vertical (i.e., upward movement from point of admission to point of departure) organization of the traditional school, and the horizontal (i.e., grouping for instructional purposes) organization leave the institution still bound in an egg crate configuration, each classroom a box in the crate, horizontally constricting progress by the individual learner in the vertical dimension.

The Questions: Particularly as related to the unique needs of many special segments of the community who are coming to the community colleges today, (e.g., dropouts, minorities, seniors, etc.) this condition poses some important

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[1] Rich, Leslie, " A Process for Alternative Education," in *American Education*, U. S. HEW, March 1977, p. 23.

[2] Cross, K. Patricia, "Accent on Learning," Jossey-Bass Publishers, London, 1977.

[3] McKeachie, W. T., "Teaching Tips: A Guidebook for the Beginning College Teacher," Lexington, Ma., Heath, 1969.

[4] Goodland, John L., "Alternative Schooling: Language & Meaning," in *Today's Education*, vol. 66, no. 1, January/ February 1977, p. 84ff.

questions for the colleges. Street puts it this way:[5] What educational program can best reach groups which are peripheral to the system? What curriculum materials are appropriate? What changes in organizational format and teaching methodology are needed?

Evidence For Change

These questions are basic to any conceptual plan for innovation. It is indeed time to change. If we learn from the past as well as present concern, there is plenty of evidence to support this need. Wayne Jennings and Joe Nathan[6] make this clear in their review of studies over a period of 50 years which "should cause us to question 95 percent of current educational practices."

This study looks at work done since the 1930's, provides extensive discussion and gives examples of courses, programs and entire institutions which demonstrate the effectiveness of innovative alternatives to traditional (classroom) instruction, and points out the support for such innovation by such authorities as Gagne and Robert A Horwitz. Jennings and Nathan also note the credence given to alternative approaches even by accrediting associations (e.g., North Central, which "developed new standards so that *even* alternative schools could be evaluated and accredited." p.569).

These authors specifically note that, as Cross and others also indicate, "many commonly held beliefs about the effectiveness" of traditional practice are questionable—including the notion that all learners should be in school for and at specified times, that schools prepare students well for society, that increased funding to do more of the same will make a significant difference, and that the traditional environment of the school is conducive to learning (p.569).

The challenge to the community college educator today is to recognize the need for change, and to do something about it, a task for which, according to Robinson[7], community college teachers are well equipped.

New Approach, Traditional Values

An approach which can direct itself to the design and delivery of learning opportunity on the basis of individual differences, combined with the values and experience of traditional instructional practice would appear to have merit as an urgently needed alternative to the lockstep configuaration of current practice—not for all, but certainly for many.

The research on Field Independent/Field Dependent cognitive styles certainly supports this contention.[8] What most teachers do by natural perception and

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[5] Street, David, (Ed.), "Innovation in Mass Education," John Wiley & Sons, New York, NY, 1969. *See also:* Brick, Michael, and Earl J. McGrath, "Innovation in Liberal Arts Colleges," published for the Institute of Higher Education by Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1969. This volume reports a study of "novel and creative practices" which have been introduced in liberal arts colleges in the United States in recent years. It approaches the concept of innovation as an imperative of our time, evidenced by the need for an alternative to the lecture approach to learning, which is "hopelessly inefficient--indeed a nearly totally ineffective--process (p.2)." The authors assert that something better is needed, "keeping in mind that learning depends only on what the student does, and not (except indirectly) on what the teacher does..."

[6] In an article entitled: "Startling/Disturbing Research on School Program Effectiveness," *Phi Delta Kappan*, vol. 58, no. 7, March 1977, p. 568ff.

[7] Robinson, Thomas E., "Teacher: Key to Library-Centered Instruction," Library College Associates, 1976. Robinson refers to the teacher as a Change-Agent and says that we are told the only constant thing in life is change. "If this is so," he says, "we can't avoid it. We must learn from it, not by trial and error, but by trial and success." p. 84.

fail to implement when they structure—anyway—their teaching material for a "class" presentation, is well documented in this study. Goodenough[9] also speaks to this point, noting that "while FI and FD individuals do not differ in their memory ability, they may differ in the way they learn."

Most Students Could Get A's

The Individual Approach: Cross notes that individualized learning may take many forms, be presented in many formats, and be utilized in many areas of learning. All such approaches, however, involve (a) active, rather than passive student involvement, (b) clear goals for learning explicitly stated, (c) small lesson units, (d) effective feedback and evaluation, and (e) self-pacing.[10] Bloom supports the idea that the self-paced, individual format is desirable on the basis of a mastery rationale.[11] In other words. *most* students could get A's, if given enough time, which would mean they have learned the material or skills, instead of the few for whom an A often only means they're the best in their class.

Alternative Formats

Postlethwait's[12] work, beginning with his use of a tape recorder to permit playbacks of his Purdue University lectures in the early 1960's has grown to a broad view of multi-media formats as effective delivery systems for educational learning materials, and for courses designed for other than traditional time frames.

Such programs work. John Guenther notes in the Kappan[13] that in a short two-year period in certain mid-west schools, an increase of 40 percent was noted in the number of mini-courses offered after the concept had been introduced in the early 1970's. Perhaps a reason for this is found in the fact that mini-courses are often more involving than are lengthy "full term" learning experiences. Four reasons that are cited by Ann Christine Heintz for the success of minicourses[14] are their "peak experience" potential because of the affective treatment they may sustain, their involvement intenstiy (teacher sets focus, students set theme), their portent of learner "expertise" upon completion, and their timeliness (e.g., tax course in March, civics in November of an election year).

Time For Change Is Now

Suffice it to say here that it becomes clear, through the literature, that the time for change is *now*; that the direction suggested by the research and the actual

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[8] David L. Cox of Rutgers University and Carol A. Moore of the Educational Testing Service team to present an excellent overview of the questions of cognitive style in learning and the need to consider individual differences in curriculum planning and educational delivery systems in their article, "Field Independence and The Structuring of Knowledge in a Social Studies Mini-Course," in *The Journal of Educational Psychology*, vol. 68, no. 5, October 1976, pp. 550-558.

[9] See "The Role of Individual Differences in Field Dependence as a Factor in Learning and Memory," ETS, RB-75-8, Princeton, NJ, 1975.

[10] She notes that the traditional classroom, specified time period mode allows us to conclude that the student has had equal time to share in a learning experience, but nothing about how much (or little) is learned.

[11] Bloom, B. S., "Mastery Learning," in J. H. Black's (Ed.) *Mastery Learning: Theory and Practice*, New York, NY, Holt, 1971.

[12] Postlethwait, S. N., "Minicourses: A Concern for Individualization," in *National Conference on Open Learning in Higher Education, Proceedings*, Lincoln, Neb., State University of Nebraska, 1974.

[13] "More on Minicourses," vol. 58, no. 3, November, 1976, p. 284.

[14] Heintz, A. C., "Short-Courses: Pathways and Pitfalls," in *Media and Methods*, vol. 13, February 1977, pp. 14-18.

experience of the profession is individualization in design and delivery system, and that the need to heed these indicators is imperative.

"Library-College"

Chabot College is considering the possible implementation of a modified "Library-College" program through the Learning Resources Center to respond to the needs evidenced in this literature. The concept of "Library-College" is not necessarily a new one, but the term itself was first broached by Dr. Louis Shores in the early 1960's, and formalized with the founding of Library-College Associates in 1968.[15] It is based upon the view that learning is a process of selection and utilization of the communications tools at our disposal to survive among the "tensions and crises" of life; further, that becoming equipped to do so "must be considered more than a possible by-product of education; it must be its chief purpose." (p.42).

Materials, Equipment, & Human Resources

The concept in its applied sense centers in the Learning Resources Library Center where the learning materials (i.e., collection in all formats), the equipment utilized to access these materials (e.g., audio visual tape recorders, viewers, projectors, readers, etc.), and the professional resource staff (Librarians) are available to open up and guide learning experience. These three resources (human, material, equipement) team with the classroom instructional faculty to provide a powerful and comprehensive focus for human learning and development when fully utilized, and are the primary base for the implementation of innovative approaches to instruction.

A summary overview of the Library-College concept in practice is furnished by the LCA when it states that it is "not an easy one to implement." It requires dedicated teachers, hard work with students who can be motivated to work hard; *classroom teachers* who are willing to work with *librarians* and *learning resourses professionals*. It involves the use of *individualized study, reasonably selected learning media*, and self-conceived outcomes. It is not a short cut, but a carefully tailored program which responds to individualized needs and provides avenues for the enlargement of pursued objectives of the learner himself or herself. A large body of supportive literature, including courses developed and tested in actual practice demonstrate that LRC-Library utilization increases, learning is enhanced, and the quality of life is enriched by such an approach.

Community College Role

Two more authorities with something to say about non-traditional study round out this review of the literature. Young Park[16] observes that the community college has, particularly in California, "generally responded to the need for alternative systems of education," primarily in response to the "needs and demands of a changing student constituency."

Target Groups

Park identifies a number of elements which influence the conceptual framework for non-traditional study, none of which was an "essential component" in the

[15] Robinson, op.cit.

[16] Park, Young, "A Conceptual Bias for Non-Traditional Study," an article in the March 1976 issue of *Education Digest*, p. 29ff.

founding conceptual plan, but all of which are now indicators of need. They read like the list of target groups presented in the summary of specific problems to be addressed and their target groups which was reported in our "brainstorming" seminar at the outset of this article—the "new students" who come here: part-time, disadvantaged minorities, unemployed, underemployed, fulltime employed, developmentally disabled, seniors, women and adults in general who have been educationally disenfranchised in the past by the narrower orientation of the traditional college and curriculum (p. 29). Park notes the changing social structure, educational objectives of learners, negative attitudes about traditional academic rules, practices and obstacles, as "most visible" evidence of an emerging value hierarchy in our time. Add to this the delivery technology available to us, new instructional methods which can be individualized and related to cognitive style, and you have a clear mandate to move toward innovation in college curriculum.

Integrated Programs

Perhaps Park's most important observation in this article is his suggestion that instructors, administrators and management, and supporting services need to be both physically and functionally together.

His question: Can a traditonal college provide such services?

His answer: *It must, to survive*. "Non-traditional education is not a gimmick or a passing fad in innovation. It is basically what the community college is all about, only more so . . ."

Non-traditional education is now at a crossroads. It is certainly not a panacea for all education ills. It is certainly needed, now, to make education work better for *all* people. Robert Byrne[17] concludes the present literature by answering that—far from departing from structure and traditional value—innovation in contemporary education is both responsible and sound. Without continuing structure and responsible pedagogy, even well-conceived innovational approaches may become a "trap that catches those who mistake contemporaneity for relevance." (p. 349). The LRC-Library College approach proposed here will ensure that if we accept the challenge, and respond to the need for change, we will not be caught in that trap.

[17]"Alternative Education: At the Crossroads," in the *Clearing House*, vol. 50, no. 8, April, 1977, p. 348ff.

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